



federally employed women • an organization for opportunity & equality for women in government
(202) 638-4404 • 1010 vermont avenue, northwest, washington, d.c. 20005

TESTIMONY
OF
FEDERALLY EMPLOYED WOMEN
BEFORE
THE HOUSE POST OFFICE AND CIVIL SERVICE SUBCOMMITTEE ON HUMAN RESOURCES
ON
THE PERMANENT AUTHORIZATION OF THE FEDERAL EMPLOYEE
FLEXIBLE AND COMPRESSED WORK SCHEDULES ACT

APRIL 24, 1985



TESTIMONY ON THE PERMANENT AUTHORIZATION OF THE FEDERAL EMPLOYEE FLEXIBLE AND COMPRESSED WORK SCHEDULES ACT BEFORE THE HOUSE POST OFFICE AND CIVIL SERVICE SUBCOMMITTEE ON HUMAN RESOURCES, APRIL 24, 1985.

CHAIRPERSON ACKERMAN, THANK YOU FOR INVITING FEDERALLY EMPLOYED WOMEN (FEW) TO TESTIFY HERE TODAY. FEDERALLY EMPLOYED WOMEN IS AN INTERNATIONAL MEMBERSHIP ORGANIZATION REPRESENTING WOMEN IN THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT THROUGHOUT THE UNITED STATES AND FOREIGN NATIONS. FEW IS A PRIVATE, NON-PROFIT, NON-PARTISAN ORGANIZATION THAT WAS FOUNDED IN 1968 TO ADVOCATE EQUAL OPPORTUNITY AND FOSTER FULL POTENTIAL FOR WORKING WOMEN IN THE FEDERAL SECTOR.

FEW HAS SUPPORTED FLEXIBLE AND COMPRESSED WORK SCHEDULES FOR FEDERAL EMPLOYEES SINCE THEIR INCEPTION IN 1977. WE STRONGLY BELIEVE THAT ALTERNATIVE WORK SCHEDULES (AWS) PROVIDE FEDERAL EMPLOYEES AS WELL AS THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT WITH MANY ADVANTAGES SUCH AS INCREASED EMPLOYEE MORALE, EFFICIENCY, AND PRODUCTIVITY; VERSATILITY TO MORE SUCCESSFULLY COMBINE FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES WITH JOB DEMANDS; AVAILABILITY OF AN EXPANDED LABOR POOL; AND ADDED INCENTIVES TO RECRUIT AND RETAIN FEDERAL EMPLOYEES.

THE FEDERAL EMPLOYEE FLEXIBLE AND COMPRESSED WORK SCHEDULES ACT ENCOMPASSES A VARIETY OF OPTIONS THAT FEDERAL EMPLOYEES CAN UTILIZE TO INCREASE THEIR PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL TIME MANAGEMENT AND ACCOMMODATE THEIR LIFESTYLES. THESE OPTIONS INCLUDE FLEXIBLE WORKING HOURS, FOUR TEN-HOUR DAYS PER WEEK, NINE WORKING DAYS OF VARYING LENGTHS PER TWO WEEK PERIOD, AND MAXIFLEX -- A COMBINATION OF THE ABOVE. ALL OF THESE OPTIONS ARE BENEFICIAL IN A NUMBER OF WAYS.

ALTERNATIVE WORK SCHEDULES (AWS) ARE ESPECIALLY BENEFICIAL TO WOMEN

WHO ARE EMPLOYED IN THE FEDERAL SECTOR. THE NUMBER OF WOMEN ENTERING THE LABOR FORCE OVERALL IS INCREASING AT A DRAMATIC RATE. TODAY, OVER 48 MILLION WOMEN ARE IN THE WORKFORCE; 53 PERCENT OF ALL WOMEN OVER THE AGE OF 16 YEARS ARE EMPLOYED. MANY OF THESE WOMEN HAVE OBLIGATIONS BEYOND THEIR CAREERS INCLUDING CARING FOR CHILDREN OR ELDERLY DEPENDENTS. FIFTY PERCENT OF ALL MOTHERS WITH CHILDREN UNDER SIX PARTICIPATE IN THE LABOR MARKET AND SIXTY-SIX PERCENT OF ALL MOTHERS WITH CHILDREN BETWEEN THE AGES OF SIX AND SEVENTEEN ARE EMPLOYED.

MOST WOMEN WORK BECAUSE OF ECONOMIC NEED. MANY FAMILIES ARE DEPENDENT UPON DUAL WAGES IN ORDER TO MAINTAIN A DECENT STANDARD OF LIVING; TAKING A FEW YEARS OFF TO RAISE CHILDREN IS NOT AN OPTION MANY WOMEN CAN AFFORD THESE DAYS. IN ADDITION, ONE IN FIVE WOMEN WORKERS IS THE HEAD OF A HOUSEHOLD AND HER INCOME IS SOLELY RESPONSIBLE FOR HOUSING AND FEEDING HER CHILDREN.

THE ECONOMIC SITUATION OF FEDERALLY EMPLOYED WOMEN REFLECTS THAT OF ALL WOMEN IN OUR SOCIETY. MOST WOMEN CIVIL SERVANTS ARE EMPLOYED BECAUSE THEY ARE DEPENDENT UPON THEIR INCOME TO SUPPORT THEMSELVES AND THEIR FAMILIES. IN APRIL 1984, NEARLY HALF OF ALL FEDERAL WORKERS IN THE GENERAL SCHEDULE GRADES WERE WOMEN, THE MAJORITY BEING CONCENTRATED IN GRADES 1-8.

ALTERNATIVE WORK SCHEDULES ALLOW MANY WOMEN WHO WORK FOR THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT TO MORE SUCCESSFULLY COMBINE THEIR CAREERS WITH THEIR PERSONAL LIVES. BY ALTERNATING WORKING HOURS, WOMEN CAN OFTEN EASE SOME OF THE FINANCIAL BURDEN OF CHILDCARE. ALTERNATIVE WORK SCHEDULES ALSO BENEFIT TWO PARENT FAMILIES WHO ARE BOTH EMPLOYED BY THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT; COUPLES

ARE BETTER ABLE TO STAGGER THEIR WORK SCHEDULES TO COINCIDE WITH THEIR CHILDREN'S SCHOOL HOURS, THUS DECREASING THE NEED FOR CHILD CARE.

THE INCORPORATION OF AWS HAS REDUCED SOME OF THE PRESSURE AND STRESS OF TRYING TO JUGGLE "TWO CAREERS" FOR MANY WOMEN AND MEN. FLEXIBILITY IN ORGANIZING ONE'S PERSONAL LIFE LEADS TO INCREASED JOB SATISFACTION AND PRODUCTIVITY -- A BENEFIT TO BOTH THE EMPLOYEE AND EMPLOYER (IN THIS CASES THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT). IN ADDITION, AWS OPTIONS MAKE AVAILABLE TO THE GOVERNMENT NUMEROUS TALENTED WOMEN WORKERS WHO OTHERWISE MIGHT BE UNABLE TO WORK IN THE FEDERAL SECTOR, THUS INCREASING THE OVERALL QUALITY OF THE FEDERAL WORKFORCE.

ALTERNATIVE WORK SCHEDULES OFFER OTHER BENEFITS AS WELL. BY ALTERNATING HOURS OR DAYS PER WEEK WORKED, FEDERAL EMPLOYEES WHO ARE ALSO PART-TIME STUDENTS CAN CONTINUE THEIR EDUCATION OR PURSUE ADVANCED DEGREES, INCREASING THEIR VALUE TO THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT. ANOTHER WAY IN WHICH THE GOVERNMENT GAINS IS IN OVERALL INCREASED PRODUCTION; I.E., ALTERNATIVE WORK SCHEDULES AND THEIR RESULTING STAGGERED WORKING HOURS ALLOW MANY GOVERNMENT OFFICES TO REMAIN OPEN BEYOND THE NORMAL EIGHT-HOUR DAY.

COMMUNITIES HAVING LARGE NUMBERS OF FEDERAL WORKERS ALSO BENEFIT FROM ALTERNATIVE WORK SCHEDULES. FLEXIBLE SCHEDULES ALLOW MORE EMPLOYEES TO PARTICIPATE IN CAR POOLS, THUS DECREASING TRAFFIC CONGESTION. THEY ALSO ENCOURAGE STAGGERED RUSH HOURS.

THE FLEXIBLE AND COMPRESSED WORK SCHEDULES ACT HAS RECEIVED OVERWHELMING

SUPPORT SINCE ITS INCEPTION. PRESENTLY, OVER 300,000 GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES IN 41 FEDERAL AGENCIES OPT FOR ALTERNATIVE WORK SCHEDULES. THE GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTING OFFICE HAS CITED INCREASED WORKER EFFICIENCY AS WELL AS DECREASED ABSENTEEISM AS REASONS TO CONTINUE THIS PROGRAM. AN OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT STUDY SHOWS THAT 90 PERCENT OF ALL EMPLOYEES AND 85 PERCENT OF ALL SUPERVISORS IN THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT SUPPORT ALTERNATIVE WORK SCHEDULES.

IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE PERMANENT AUTHORIZATION OF ALTERNATIVE WORK SCHEDULES, FEW URGES AN AGGRESSIVE EDUCATION PROGRAM FOR SUPERVISORS AND MANAGERS BY THE OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF AWS PROGRAMS. EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS AND SEMINARS SHOULD BE DEVELOPED THAT COULD AID SUPERVISORS IN DEVISING POSSIBLE AWS IN THEIR AGENCIES. WHENEVER POSSIBLE, FEDERAL EMPLOYEES SHOULD BE ^{kept} WELL INFORMED OF THE EXISTENCE OF FLEXIBLE WORK SCHEDULES.

FEW SUPPORTS H.R. 1534 WHICH WOULD CONVERT THE TEMPORARY AUTHORITY TO ALLOW FEDERAL EMPLOYEES TO WORK ON A FLEXIBLE OR COMPRESSED SCHEDULE UNDER TITLE 5, UNITED STATES CODE, INTO PERMANENT AUTHORITY. WE URGE THIS COMMITTEE TO CONSIDER AND PASS THIS LEGISLATION IN AN EFFICIENT MANNER IN ORDER TO ENSURE THE PERMANENT AUTHORIZATION OF ALTERNATIVE WORK SCHEDULES BEFORE THE EXPIRATION OF THE PRESENT PROGRAM ON JULY 23, 1985. AT A TIME WHEN GOVERNMENT MORALE IS VERY LOW DUE TO THE CONSTANT THREAT OF CUTBACKS IN FEDERAL EMPLOYEE PROGRAMS AND BENEFITS, THE PERMANENT AUTHORIZATION OF ALTERNATIVE WORK SCHEDULE PROGRAMS COULD PROVIDE A RAY OF HOPE THAT THE ADMINISTRATION AND CONGRESS ARE CONCERNED ABOUT FEDERAL EMPLOYEES.

FEW APPLAUDS THIS COMMITTEE FOR THEIR AGGRESSIVE PURSUANCE OF THIS

THANK YOU.